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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the impact of outcome-based education (OBE) in one school district 5 years after its adoption. The study is guided by constructivist theory and a perspective that policy studies can have an important problem-finding function. The basic assumption of the OBE approach, that educational improvement depends on a shift in focus to outcomes and greater accountability for results, was adopted in a small city school district in Washington as "outcome-driven education" (ODE). Data sources include open-ended interviews with 13 district administrators (central staff and school principals and assistants) and a collection of relevant documents. The impact of ODE is seen in both outputs, or changes in practice, and outcomes, or effects of these changes. Although findings are limited in that they are based on administrators' perceptions, the most significant result is the value ascribed to ODE in stimulating an inspirational vision and the acknowledgement that teaming, an input mechanism, is the most valued mechanism or aspect of the ODE model. Results suggest that the value of OBE may lie in its contributions to professional accountability. (Contains 27 references.) (SLD)

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ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION: OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

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March, 1994

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ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION: OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

"Outcome-based education" (OBE) has emerged as a major reform movement over the last decade. OBE is a multi-faceted reform with wide variation in its implementation. Local school districts, often acting on their own initiative, have adopted various outcome-based models with the hope of improving student achievement; and entire state systems (including Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Washington) have instituted some form of an outcomes approach.

Advocates of OBE claim it leads to "success" for all students. Through a fusing of mastery learning and curriculum alignment principles, OBE is said to address the learning needs of all classes of students, including those "at risk." However, as is the case with most rapidly disseminated reforms, OBE's impact has not been subject to in-depth evaluation. To date, the literature on OBE consists primarily of anecdotal "success stories" (e.g. Brown, 1988; Briggs, 1988; Fitzpatrick, 1991; Guskey & Block, 1991; Vickery, 1988; 1990). Only a few exploratory studies have addressed in a systematic way the impact of OBE on educational processes and outcomes (e.g. Capper, 1992; Furman, 1993; Evans & King, 1992). Given its continued grip on the field, the OBE reform movement should be analyzed from a variety of theoretical perspectives and evaluated through systematic research.

The purpose of this case study is to explore the impact of OBE in one school district, five years after its adoption. Two theoretical frames guide this study. The first is a constructivist view of social "reality," including organizational life, which assumes that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective interpretations of events. Thus, to explore and analyze social/organizational phenomena, it is important to consider the personal understandings or perspectives of individuals

involved in the events. The second perspective is that policy studies can serve an important "problem finding" function (Boyd, 1988) by identifying unanticipated/unintended outcomes, often overlooked in traditional "evaluation" studies. In line with these perspectives, this study focuses on OBE's impact, including its unintended outcomes, as understood by administrators. As Hallinger, Murphy and Hausman (1992) point out, the "perceptions of professionals who work in schools" is a neglected perspective for understanding reform. Before presenting the study's methods and findings, it is important to bring some definition to the term "outcome-based education" and to describe the context for the present study.

What is Outcome-based Education?

"Outcome-based education" (OBE) is a rubric for an approach to school improvement. The basic assumptions of this approach are that educational improvement depends on a shift in focus from inputs to outcomes and on greater accountability for results. Once desirable student outcomes are identified, all educational practices should be keyed to these outcomes, and educators should be held accountable for achieving them. These assumptions have been translated into various OBE school improvement models and into outcomes-as-standards accountability systems at the state level (Furman, in press).

The development of the outcomes concept into a school improvement model and its rapid dissemination throughout the field owes much to foundational work and effective advocacy by Bill Spady (Spady, 1988; Spady & Marshall, 1991). As a school improvement model, OBE fuses two recent trends in education--mastery learning (Block, Efthim & Burns, 1989; Slavin, 1990) and curriculum alignment (English, 1984)--into a systematic approach. The guiding principles of an OBE model, according to Spady (1988), are: (a) a relentless focus on outcomes as a driver for the educational program; (b) expanded opportunities and support for students to achieve these outcomes; and (c) high expectations for students, frequently stated as the "success for all" claim. Thus, in

OBE districts, a "design sequence" (Spady, 1988) is established. First, exit outcomes for the total program are defined. These outcomes should be future-oriented, aimed at equipping students for success in a "complex, challenging, high-tech future" (Spady & Marshall, 1991, p. 70). Next, the entire curriculum is re-designed into "coherent, thematic" programs, courses and units that support the outcomes. And third, instructional and assessment practices are brought into alignment with the outcomes and curriculum.

Spady and Marshall (1991) make the point that OBE models vary in degree of adherence to these principles. They differentiate between "traditional," "transitional," and "transformational" versions of OBE. In traditional OBE, outcomes are indeed defined and instructional practices are aligned to these outcomes. However, the source of the outcomes is often the existing curriculum. Thus, "outcomes are synonymous with traditional content-dominated categories that do not relate to real-life demands and living experiences" (Spady & Marshall, 1991, p. 69). In transitional OBE, educators focus on "higher-level outcomes, such as critical thinking, effective communication, technological applications, and complex problem solving" (p. 69) rather than subject matter knowledge. The traditional curriculum is not discarded, but is adapted to serve the goal of achieving the higher-level outcomes. In transformational OBE, "the highest evolution of the OBE concept" (p. 69), the ideal OBE "design sequence" is followed, with the entire educational program being redesigned to serve critical outcomes. According to Spady and Marshall, very few districts practice transformational OBE. They name the U.S. Department of Defense Dependents Schools in the Mediterranean Region, the Aurora, Colorado, public school system and the Hot Springs County, Wyoming, school district as exemplars of this model.

Other versions of OBE differ somewhat from Spady's model. The "Outcomes Driven Developmental Model" (ODDM) is a well-known version first developed in

Johnson City, New York, in the early 1970s. According to its adherents, ODDM is "the only model of total, district-wide school improvement validated by the Program Effectiveness Panel of the National Diffusion Network of the U.S. Department of Education" (Champlin, 1991, p. 34). John Champlin is a leading proponent of ODDM, providing consultation on its adoption to school districts around the nation through the National Center for Outcome Based Education.

According to Spady and Marshall (1991), ODDM fits in the "transitional" category of OBE models. That is, ODDM districts may identify outcomes that address higher-order competencies, but tend to "postpone the overwhelming challenge of rethinking and restructuring everything about their curriculum and delivery structures" (p. 69). The ODDM model includes three major components. The first is a 14-step "instructional process" based on mastery learning principles (Nyland, 1991). The major components of the process are: (a) assessment of students on "prerequisites" for an instructional unit and provision of remedial instruction if necessary; (b) "best shot" whole group instruction, followed by guided practice; (c) continuous formative assessment to evaluate students on mastery of the unit; and (d) enrichment activities for students who have mastered the unit and "correctives" for those who have not. For summative assessment, instead of letter grades, students are "certified either as having mastered the unit's objectives or as not having completed the unit" (Vickery, 1988, p. 53).

The second ODDM component is teacher teaming. In ODDM schools, teams of two to four teachers at the same grade level or in the same subject area meet regularly to plan instructional activities for the students they share. The team members "share responsibility for student behavior, student grouping, and student learning. They provide support for each other (and accountability) when implementing new instructional processes" (Nyland, 1991, p. 31). The driving vision for team planning is the exit outcomes defined for the program. The third component is a student discipline approach

based on William Glasser's "reality therapy." "Reality therapy" is intended to help students take responsibility for their own behavior (Vickery, 1988). A three-step counseling replaces traditional punishment and discipline.

In sum, OBE as a school improvement model combines the principles of mastery learning and curriculum alignment with the philosophy that all students can learn and a design sequence which flows from the *a priori* specification of exit outcomes. Thus, according to Spady (1988), OBE is not a specific program or reproducible package "but a way of designing, developing, delivering, and documenting instruction in terms of its intended goals and outcomes" (p. 5). Though the principles of OBE may be translated into "packages" for dissemination (e.g. ODDM as popularized by Champlin), OBE models vary widely depending on the contexts in which they are implemented and the perspectives of the models' developers. This lack of operational specificity contributes to the difficulty of evaluating the OBE reform movement. Further, OBE is a complex, multi-level reform. If Spady's (1988) "design sequence" is followed, for example, several aspects of the total school program are restructured, including the curriculum, instructional methods and assessment practices. A specific OBE program like ODDM adds even more changes such as how teachers work together. As Mitchell (1989) points out, these changes reflect several different "structural mechanisms for environmental control" (p. 51) in the school. Evaluating a reform becomes "exceedingly complex when several different control structures are being modified at the same time" (p. 54). Indeed, according to John Champlin, "appropriate methods for evaluating OBE have not yet been determined" (personal communication, May 18, 1992).

Given these evaluation challenges and the rapid dissemination of OBE, it is not surprising that most of the OBE literature consists of anecdotal "success stories" and advocacy pieces. The few analytical pieces and evaluation studies completed to date have been conducted from differing perspectives and do not lead to any general

conclusions. Capper and Jamison (1992) consider the match of OBE with four theoretical paradigms--structural functionalism, interpretivism, critical theory, and poststructuralism. They conclude that OBE reflects most closely the traditional structural functionalist paradigm in that it "demands exceptionally tight control over the educational process" (p. 19) and that standardized outcomes are prescribed for all. Notwithstanding its rhetoric of "success for all," then, OBE is not likely to be "emancipating" to underrepresented groups. Furman (in press) analyzes the use of OBE as an accountability mechanism. She concludes that state-level OBE adoptions reflect a bureaucratic accountability approach and give rise to a number of issues, including the high-stakes use of performance assessments and the imposition of mainstream educational values on all cultural groups within the state. Furman also concludes that the potential for OBE's use as a professional accountability mechanism has not been adequately recognized or explored.

A few researchers have conducted data-based exploratory studies of OBE's impact. Evans and King (1992) report the accumulated results of studies conducted in ten OBE sites in Minnesota. They conclude that OBE is perceived to enhance student learning for the "average and unmotivated learner" (p. 12) while creating "disadvantages" for higher achieving students. Evans and King are careful to point out that these conclusions are based on "perceptions" of educators, and that quantitative data on student achievement effects was not yet available in Minnesota's OBE districts at the time of their review. Capper (1992) studied OBE's adoption in two high schools from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. She concludes that some aspects of the reform were "empowering" to all students while others, including the administration's control over the process, were constraining. To Capper, the most disturbing aspect of these OBE adoptions is that power issues went unquestioned and unexamined.

The present study aims to contribute to the emergent but sparse empirical base regarding OBE's impact.

The Context of the Present Study

This is a case study of a small city school district in an agricultural region of Washington State. The district's student population of 7,350 is 53% minority (44% Hispanic, 5% African-American and 4% other). These students are housed in 12 schools: one high school, one alternative high school, two middle schools, and eight elementary schools. Five years before the study, the district adopted an outcome-based education approach, based on the ODDM model described in the previous section of this paper. The district called its model "Outcome-Driven Education" (ODE). The district became known throughout Washington State as an "exemplary" outcome-based site, with district personnel serving as OBE consultants to other school districts and state agencies. In this report, the subject school district will be called "Riverview."

During the decade before the adoption of ODE, Riverview had its share of political problems. Conflict between the growing Hispanic population and the entrenched white (non-Hispanic) school leadership led to teacher strikes, board recalls, state investigations and even a "race riot," according to the former superintendent. It was clear to district leaders that "change" was needed. In political terms, school leaders felt compelled to demonstrate to the community that the schools were not adrift, but were headed in a positive new direction.

Coincidentally, the superintendent became aware of and interested in the outcomes-based education movement. He invited John Champlin, a leading promoter of the ODDM model, to Riverview as a consultant. The superintendent became a zealous ODDM advocate, promoted buy-in among the administrative staff and school board, and convinced the board to adopt the ODE model as school policy in 1988. The board identified five exit outcomes for students and mandated three major district-wide changes as part of ODE: (a) universal use by teachers of the ODDM 14-step "instructional process"; (b) teacher/principal teaming for instructional decision-making; and (c) adoption of "reality therapy" as the district's student discipline approach.

Riverview then took an incremental approach to implementation: During school year 1988-89 three pilot elementary schools implemented ODE; the following year all elementary schools were involved; during 1990-91 the secondary schools implemented the model; and in 1991-92 the middle schools finalized their implementation. Data were collected for this study during the 1992-93 school year.

Methods

Data sources include open-ended interviews with district administrators and collection of relevant documents. I interviewed 13 persons: the former superintendent, who had led the ODE adoption; the director of staff development, the special education director; a high school principal, seven elementary principals, and an elementary assistant principal. Interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. I chose to focus on administrators for three reasons: (a) administrators, especially building principals, seemed to be in a favorable position for observing both pedagogical and organizational changes brought about by OBE; (b) most of the district's administrators had been in their positions a number of years and thus had experienced together the transition to ODE; and (c) administrators, especially principals, "comprise an important role group in restructuring efforts, given their considerable control over the implementation of school-level innovations" (Hallinger, Murphy & Hausman, 1992, p. 331). To supplement the interviews, a variety of documents were collected, including board minutes, district goal/philosophy statements, reports of outside evaluators and internal memoranda.

I followed in general the constant comparative method for qualitative data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data were read several times and coded according to emerging themes. The themes were continually revised as the analysis progressed. Finally, I grouped the themes according to a framework derived inductively from the data. The product of the analysis represents administrators' perceptions regarding anticipated and unanticipated outcomes, or impact, of the ODE model adoption. To

understand the results more fully, I linked my findings to recent discussions in the literature on professional accountability in education.

Administrators' Perceptions of Outcome-based Education

The themes that emerged during data analysis related to two aspects of the ODE adoption--issues of implementation and impact. Implementation issues included (a) staff resistance to what was perceived as a "top-down" decision to adopt ODE; (b) the "trauma" and stress of attempting to implement many changes simultaneously; (c) poor communication with parents/community as to the nature of ODE and what changes parents might expect to see; and (d) the exodus of many experienced teachers who did not agree with the outcomes approach. While these implementation issues are helpful in understanding the history in the subject district and would be of interest to those who attempt to adopt ODDM under similar circumstances, they reflect several of the classic problems of top-down policy implementation, which have been explored and documented by a number of researchers over the years (e.g. Boyd, 1988; Clinton, 1979; Peck, Furman & Helmstetter, 1992; Smith & Keith, 1971) These implementation themes will not be further developed in this report. It is worth noting, however, that OBE promoters and consultants, in pushing for sweeping changes through OBE model adoption, have done little to help districts avoid these well-known pitfalls of large-scale, top-down restructuring efforts.

This report will focus on the second major category that emerged during data analysis, the impact of ODE. In searching the data for "outcomes" of the ODE adoption, I determined that they were of two types: some represented changes in <u>practice</u>, that is, in how administrators and teachers did their work, while others represented the results, or <u>impact</u>, of these changes. In the sections that follow, the former will be called "outputs" and the latter "outcomes."

Outputs of ODE

For the purposes of this analysis, "outputs" will mean sustained changes in practice brought about by the ODE adoption. ODE produced changes in practice for both teachers and principals, according to the informants in this study.

Changes in Teacher Practice

For teachers, changes in practice related to teaching methods and teaming for instructional decision-making. These reflect two of the areas of change mandated by the ODE adoption--the ODDM 14-step instructional process, and teacher teaming. These changes varied in their intensity and impact. Teaming involved the most actual change and created the greatest impact for teacher.

Teaching. According to administrators, getting teachers to "buy in" to ODE's instructional process was the easiest part of the ODE adoption. All teachers in the district participated in staff development that provided training in ODE's mastery learning approach: "best shot" whole class instruction, guided practice, "extension" activities for students who master the lesson, and "correctives" for those who have not. Administrators did not claim 100% compliance with this aspect of ODE, but the general consensus was that "most" teachers were "on board," particularly at the elementary level. The reason for this relatively smooth acceptance, according to administrators, was that ODE's instructional process represented "good teaching" that most teachers could identify with. One principal stated, "The instructional process was common sensical . . . Teachers were easily convinced that they had been doing this all the time. They usually said, 'we've been doing all of this, they just put a title on it.'" Thus, the pedagogical aspect of ODE did not represent a radical change for teachers and was relatively easy to implement.

However, the data indicate two qualifications to this picture. First, administrators had no way to know for sure the level of implementation of the instructional process.

Principals had a good feel for the instructional methods used in their buildings, but the district did not have a monitoring system in place to evaluate teachers on level of ODE implementation. The director of staff development stated, "The instructional process should be monitored all the time, but until you are real clear in actual practice . . . some people have tried to put the instructional process in a checklist form but it won't fit in a checklist form." A principal stated, "There's no proof on paper that we're doing it this way. But principals see it and team members keep it on task." Second, the picture of harmonious implementation is clouded by the fact that many teachers had left the district rather than accept the mastery learning approach. One principal estimated that as many as 100 teachers out of a total of about 465 had left over the previous five years. As these teachers were replaced, new hires were required to use ODE's instructional process.

In sum, a persistent change in teacher practice produced by ODE was widespread use of the mastery learning instructional process. Though administrators had constructed an understanding that teachers readily accepted this change, its implementation was not without costs, including a major turnover in the teaching staff.

Teaming. The second major change for teachers was teaming for instructional decision-making. The typical model for teaming was for teachers who "shared the same students" to meet regularly, perhaps once or twice a week, to discuss and plan instruction. At the elementary level, teams might consist of same-grade level teachers along with specialists serving those grades; at the middle and high schools, teachers across disciplines might meet to look for ways to integrate instruction. Building principals were considered part of the teams as well. Team planning activities were to be guided by the central "vision" of ODE, that all students can learn. According to administrators, teachers were constantly asking themselves and each other, "Are we doing everything we can to ensure success for these students?" Teaming thus became an accountability mechanism for instructional decision-making.

Teaming was intensely resisted by teachers at the beginning of ODE's implementation. Teaming involved changes in both working relationships and the way in which teachers did their planning. The intensity of this change can be contrasted to the change in instructional process. Where teachers were used to cyclical changes in the popularity of different instructional methods, and the idea that a district would promote and even mandate one particular approach was not foreign, teachers had always had the prerogative to plan instruction autonomously and privately. Teacher teaming made planning a cooperative and public activity. However, despite teacher resistance, teaming was an unavoidable change under ODE. Where the change in instructional practice took place behind the closed doors of the classroom and was not systematically monitored, teaming was public and required. The building principal attended team meetings, and everyone assigned to the team had to participate. Ironically, though it was the most resisted change, teaming became the most valued practice instituted under ODE. The value and power of teaming was referenced throughout the data:

> For me, teaming is a major piece of outcome-based education. It's a major piece to me at both the elementary and the middle school levels of creating that success for kids, of talking about making it a continuous progress for kids. And if we do away with teaming . . . I'm concerned about that. Concerned about, that we go back to that flea market model where everybody's back in their classrooms doing their thing. And you know they're not necessarily talking or connecting with each other. . . . That's a piece that keeps people connected and keeps people talking about success and one student at a time.

> Teachers wouldn't want to give up teams now. It's their source of support.

> People said that teaming was absolutely essential, that people had bonded with each other, had gained self-esteem; they gained concern for others as adults. They said that they didn't want to do away with that.

Changes in Principal Practice

For principals, changes in practice related to serving as change agents, participating in team meetings which involved shared decision-making, and facilitating

instruction. Where team participation was mandated by ODE, serving as change agent and facilitating instruction were unanticipated changes for principals.

Serving as Change Agents. In retrospect, principals recognized that they had served as key "change agents" during the five year time period of ODE's adoption and implementation. Principals felt that their role was to articulate the ODE "vision" for their staffs and get teachers to buy in. One principal stated:

> My perception was that we were to articulate what we were doing . . . It was easy for me to do that because of the basic premise of outcome driven that all kids can learn . . . We were expected to articulate the vision . . . facilitate it, move it, go with it and nurture the changes in the building and identify the changes . . . There were other changes that started cropping up so the administrator needed to be perceptive and sense all those and nurture slowly but surely in a way that teachers and staff would buy into it so they could move the process along.

To do this, principals had to "listen to what people needed for support" and try to provide "the concrete interpretation of what the outcome will look like." Another principal believed that "people find it easier to adopt if they know what the outcome will look like" and thus provided concrete modeling of ODE's instructional process for his staff.

Serving as a change agent may be seen as an inherent part of the process of implementing a major reform initiative. As such, it may not appear to be an enduring change in administrative practice under ODE. However, given its persistence over five years, and the fact that the need to promote acceptance of the central premises of outcome-based education could continue for years, change agency seemed to become an integral part of principals' work in Riverview.

Teaming. Under ODE principals were expected to participate in team decision-making in two ways. They were to meet with all the teacher planning teams in their buildings at least once a week, and they were to participate in shared decision-making with building "core teams" established under ODE. For most principals this meant two or more team meetings per day. Principals reported that since these meetings involved so

much small group contact with teachers, they experienced fewer one-on-one interactions with teachers and held fewer full faculty meetings.

The building "core teams" had originally been established to assist principals in implementing ODE. For example, the core teams could help determine what staff development activities related to ODE were most appropriate for the staff. Gradually, according to administrators, these teams evolved into administrative "cabinets." Principals found themselves in a shared decision-making mode in working with these teams. This was a challenge for many:

> Principals reorganized themselves from having just faculty meetings to having leaderships teams to help make a lot of decisions that were more consensus based versus a top-down type of model . . . People even struggled with, when do you make a top-down decision? When do you make a consensus decision? . . . Because there was that feeling for a long time that in the organization every decision had to be a consensus decision. All the way to the point, and I'm not exaggerating when I say this, if I'm going to change the hours the janitor works because of whatever. Principals were scratching their heads and saying, "Gee, do I need to bring the people together and talk about this, because this may impact when their garbage cans are dumped."

For more "authoritarian" principals, this adjustment was especially difficult.

Facilitating Instruction. Two aspects of ODE led to enhanced activity as "instructional facilitators" on the part of building principals. First, principals were participating as regular members of instructional planning teams with teachers. Through these teams, they became more aware of, and greater contributors to, the teaching processes going on in their buildings. Second, principals' credibility as instructional leaders was enhanced under ODE. Under ODE, all principals and teachers were trained in the same instructional process. Teachers had more confidence in the principal's "expertise" and were more willing to have principals in their classrooms providing advice. One principal contrasted the ODE context with a typical "flea market" school, in which a variety of teaching approaches are used by teachers. The principal's credibility as instructional leader in a "flea market" school is weaker, because the principal cannot

possibly be expert in so many different approaches. Another principal stated, "Principals complain about time to be instructional leaders. In places without homogeneity of focus, this expectation goes away. People fall back into management. Here, we can do it." Under ODE, then, principals were more confident, had more credibility and spent more time as instructional facilitators.

Outcomes of ODE

For the purpose of this analysis, "outcomes" will mean the enduring effects brought about by changes in practice under ODE. As with the "outputs" identified above, the "outcomes" emerged from the data on administrator's perceptions. While the identification of "outputs" involved relatively low level inferences from the data, the "outcomes" emerged from higher level inferences. That is, rather than accepting at face value much of the rhetoric about ODE's positive effects, I asked myself as researcher, "What appear to be the lasting effects of the ODE adoption in Riverview?" I assumed as well that lasting effects would be linked to changes in practice. These effects were most visible for teachers and administrators. Ironically, given ODE's "success for all students" rhetoric, outcomes for students were uncertain and undocumented.

Uncertain Student Outcomes

Three sources of data addressed ODE's impact on students: anecdotal data from interviews, standardized achievement test scores, and the report of an outside evaluator on some initial efforts to assess the five ODE outcomes. In general, administrators were vague about ODE's impact on students, seemed somewhat uncomfortable with the topic and their opinions differed. One principal claimed "tremendous growth" in reading skills in his building for all students. According to the building's own criterion-referenced assessment, grades two through five had each shown a gain of at least seven percent in goal attainment over one year. Similarly, another principal stated:

> I think the students benefit, because teachers are more intentional in terms of how I get this information across in ways that fit this child. Now that is

> not new, but that process helped us, encouraged us to think more about the modalities, the presentations, the learning styles, all of those things we had talked about prior to ODE. Like I said, it's not new, but it served as a way to bring these things to a focus, on what was best for the child.

In contrast, another administrator stated: "The reality is that after four or five years of it, what the bottom line is, is our reading scores have dropped and so looking at the thousands of hours that we've put into training, changes in the curriculum, we see no discernible benefits in reading. We have more kids in the lower quartile in reading now than we did before we started. . . We haven't seen the changes in performance." And according to one disgruntled former principal, "As a principal we are in the business of not being honest with the public and tell them that this is the worst thing in the world that we have ever done. No, I don't think it is effective [for students]."

There was more agreement, however, regarding benefits for "at-risk" students. This was stated in a variety of ways: "ODE is a godsend for LEP (limited English proficiency) students and for special education kids. They have become our kids--the ownership has increased." "The gap would be worse" without ODE. The special education director posited that ODE, with its emphasis on mastery of defined outcomes, "gave us some common language to deal with regular classroom teachers." Enhanced communication between special education and regular teachers led, in turn, to "a higher probability of inclusion" for special education students. The general understanding among administrators, then, was that ODE was particularly beneficial for students with learning problems. This perception reflects Evans and Kings's (1992) findings in Minnesota that OBE was perceived to enhance student learning for "average and unmotivated" learners.

Administrator's discomfort and imprecision in talking about student outcomes seemed to spring from a lack of data to substantiate their claims. According to administrators, achievement test scores across the district had not changed significantly since ODE was implemented. Further, the district, at the time of the study, had not

succeeded in developing a standardized assessment system linked to ODE's five outcomes. An outside evaluator had developed a "Student Outcomes Inventory" (SOI) intended to assess student's mastery level in relation to these outcomes. The first year the instrument was used (1989-90) served as a baseline. The next and final year the instrument was used it had been modified in a number of ways so that the data were not directly comparable to the baseline data from the first year. The evaluator's report was generally considered to be too lengthy, too complex and not "useful." Riverview continued to struggle with developing their own assessments for ODE's student outcomes.

An Inspirational Vision

A dominant theme throughout the data was that ODE had stimulated a powerful vision for education in Riverview. According to administrators, this vision was widely shared by administrators and teachers. The pervasiveness and power of ODE's vision was evidenced both by the language administrators used and by the zealous enthusiasm with which they spoke:

> The strong tenet of making an organization go is to create a vision. Saying one vision over and over again and going from there. Being able to say that schools create the success and success breeds success. All students can succeed. The vision should be compelling, should be emotionally evoking enough that you can go and work with some of the beliefs. That's exactly what we did. We created, set out that vision, and kept on saying it over and over again. Putting it on paper . . . Our business is education. Our business is creating success for kids. Our business is moving kids on.
>
> There is a common vocabulary; I have seen that continue to surface.
>
> We all should be driven by the same vision. We can't dispute the vision that all kids can learn, because all kids can learn.

This vision was stimulated and maintained by several aspects of ODE. All staff received the same training in the basic premises and philosophy of ODE; the ODE instructional process, mandated for all, was anchored in these premises; and hiring

practices since ODE's implementation led to a staff that was fairly homogeneous in its receptivity to ODE. Most important to continual refinement and maintenance of the vision, however, was the teaming mechanism established by ODE. Through teaming, teachers continually re-articulated the vision and examined whether their practices were supporting it.

In sum, ODE stimulated an inspirational vision for educators' work in Riverview. This vision was that "all students can learn and succeed if educators continually evaluate their practices toward this end." The power and pervasiveness of this vision was remarkable considering the initial resistance to many aspects of ODE and numerous problems associated with its implementation.

Enhanced Collegiality

Closely aligned to the vision outcome was enhanced collegiality within the teaching corps. According to administrators, teacher teaming under ODE produced better collegial relationships, and this collegiality was continuing to evolve as teachers became more skilled at teaming: "Collegiality and morale is higher. They're teaming on a more sophisticated level--sharing, finding out, asking questions. Teachers wouldn't want to give up teams now." Similarly, another principal stated that ODE's impact was "seen in teacher morale, teacher camaraderie, the affect of things." Thus, ODE created a structure through teaming that had the potential to enhance professional collegiality.

Professional Growth.

Despite the stress involved, principals credited ODE implementation as a professional development opportunity, a chance to practice "transformational leadership." Most said they were better administrators and leaders as a result, and were gratified by this outcome: "For me personally, it has given me some confidence, it has allowed me to grow . . . it forced me to look at things differently." This professional growth outcome for principals was not necessarily anticipated at the beginning of ODE's implementation. It appeared to be a product of the principal's "change agent" role and teaming

participation. Principals had to get better at persuading, supporting, listening and delegating. This outcome was related, then, to both the long-term implementation/change process and to the structures established by ODE.

Overwork and Stress

In surprising contrast to the zealous enthusiasm for ODE's vision, administrators claimed to be overworked, stressed and even "exhausted" by ODE's demands: "It's [implementation of ODE] exhausting and I am feeling very tired. I feel like a little mouse pushing an elephant. How much longer can I keep my energy up?" The staff development director stated, "I'm surprised I'm still here. Working here is exhausting, but you feel you can make an impact for kids." Teachers, too, were seen as stressed by the ODE adoption: "Principals are stressed out--teachers too. There are so many things to change. The challenge is to manage what is reasonable." As with several other ODE outcomes, it is not clear how much of this stress and exhaustion was attributable to the challenges of a large-scale restructuring effort and how much to the inherent processes and structure of ODE, e.g. participation in teaming.

Discussion

This study explored the impact of OBE from the perspective of administrators in one school district. This impact was seen to include both outputs, or changes in practice, and outcomes, or effects of these changes. The study's findings are limited in that they are based on administrators' perceptions, or common understandings, about these changes and effects. This study did not attempt, for example, to examine classrooms for observable changes in teacher practice. Rather, an assumption has been made that administrators, particularly building principals, are credible observers of the teaching enterprise and reflective critics of the change process in which they have been so deeply involved for a number of years.

With this limit in mind, the most significant result of this study was the value ascribed to ODE in stimulating an inspirational vision, and, relatedly, that teaming was

the most valued mechanism, or output, of the ODE model, which led to this shared vision and standards for upholding it. That an inspirational vision and the teaming mechanism which maintained it would be the most valued aspects of ODE was largely unanticipated, both by those who lived the ODE experience and by this researcher. ODE's rhetoric is dominated by a focus on student outcomes and the mastery learning instructional process as the mechanism to produce these outcomes. The alignment among targeted outcomes, methods, and curriculum, along with the anticipated increase in student achievement, are considered the sine qua non of outcome-based education. Yet, as discussed, very little data existed regarding improvement in student outcomes. Administrators could not back up their claims of positive outcomes for students and were uncomfortable with this lack of evidence. In its "problem-finding" function, then, this study suggests a paradox in the OBE reform movement. OBE is intended to shift education's focus from inputs to student outcomes. Yet this study demonstrated that an input mechanism, teaming, was the most valued aspect of the ODE model, and that the vision created through teaming was more inspirationally salient to teachers and administrators than student outcomes, which are difficult to document.

How do we understand the "vision" value ascribed to OBE by the administrators in this study? Some clues are provided by recent work on professional accountability in education. Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992) argue for a shift from bureaucratic accountability mechanisms, which have been historically dominant in education, to professional accountability. Professional accountability means that educators are accountable first and foremost to the standards of their profession, not to rules and regulations promulgated by policy-makers. In contrast to bureaucratic accountability, rules for practice are determined through the context-bound professional judgment of the educator. The individualistic nature of teaching and learning is respected. Teachers have the challenging responsibility to determine best teaching methods for individual students and unique groups of students.

Since professional accountability relies on professional judgment, it implies a number of necessary conditions for its successful use. First, it implies the importance of a quality teaching force. Teachers must be prepared to make quality decisions that reflect the best available professional knowledge and the standards of the profession. Second, it requires continued professional development through collaboration and consultation with other educators. Organizational arrangements that allow for "collegial time needed to develop the shared norms and values that support professional practice" are necessary (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 1992, p. 22). Third, professional accountability requires a commitment to the standards of the profession. Foremost among these standards, according to Darling-Hammond and Snyder, is a commitment to the "welfare of the client."

OBE, as explored in the present study, matches the premises of professional accountability in two ways. First, the teacher teaming mechanism of the ODE model provided for the collegial time called for by Darling-Hammond and Snyder (1992). The data clearly indicate that a heightened sense of collegiality emerged from the teaming experience and that teachers came to value this aspect of ODE above all others. More important, the data indicate that OBE's vision was refined and maintained through teaming. Second, the OBE vision, the most valued outcome of the model, provided a powerful standard of practice for Riverview teachers. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Furman, in press), an unaddressed issue in Darling-Hammond and Snyder's discussion of professional accountability is a lack in American education of well-articulated standards of practice. This study suggests that OBE's vision can provide such a standard of practice for educators.

In summary, OBE is a popular but understudied reform in education. In exploring the impact of one OBE model, this study suggests that OBE's value may reside in its contributions to professional accountability--a "vision" or standard of practice for

education, and a teaming model that allows for professional collaboration--rather than in its effect on student outcomes. This potential value of OBE should be further explored.

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